



Teacher's Guide

Yellowstone Wolves: Territoriality & Clan Behavior **NATURE Science Education Series**

Grade Levels:

5-12

Subject Areas:

Sciences
Life Sciences
Biology
Earth Sciences
Ecology

Synopsis:

The rise, fall, and rebirth of a wolf clan in Yellowstone National Park provides a unique opportunity to observe clan behavior, territoriality and survival in animal societies. The Druid clan, one of the largest and most powerful packs ever studied, reigns supreme in the Lamar Valley until the clan's dominant alpha leader dies and the pack is challenged for the best winter range in the Park. Eventually the Slough gang defeats them and takes over the Lamar Valley. When a deadly virus wipes out Slough pups and a lone male who has been courting female juveniles is accepted into the defeated remnant of the Druids, the clan fights to recover its territory. The three-year study captures the cycle of the seasons in Yellowstone, the threat of viruses that kill animal populations, and the dynamic interactions of Yellowstone's animal families.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain how biologists structured this study of animal behavior.
- Analyze the relationship between clan behavior, adaptation and survival in this case study.
- Predict what might have happened had the Druids not found a new leader.
- Describe the conclusions about nature and animal societies that can be drawn from this study.

Vocabulary:

legacy, Alpha, stamina, waxwings, juniper berries, flirt, Casanova, courts, formidable, endurance, exile, Parvo, virus, dispersed, rut, rutting

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

What characteristics of Yellowstone National Park make it one of the world's most favorable areas for nature study?

What animals graze or hunt in Yellowstone?

Why were the wolves of Yellowstone once an endangered species?

Why did wildlife biologists re-introduce wolves into Yellowstone?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

What characteristics made the Lamar Valley the best winter range in Yellowstone?

How do biologists distinguish between individual members of wolf clans in Yellowstone? Why do they make these distinctions?

What tactics do wolves use to hunt elk?

How were the Sloughs able to break the Druids' ten-year supremacy in the Lamar Valley? Why were they unable to maintain their supremacy?

How did 302 gain leadership of the Druids? Why were the Druids threatened before their acceptance of 302? Do you think that they accepted him for that reason? What does this tell us about survival in nature?

Further Activities:

Investigate the conditions that have resulted in a doubling of the wolf population in the Northern Rockies, Alaska, or the Midwest.

Find detailed information about wolf species and subspecies based on their geographical location around the world.

Find out if wolves are dangerous to humans. Include an investigation into the problems of "habituated wolves."

Write a persuasive essay explaining why people need to be educated about wolves.

Related New Dimension Media Titles:

Shape of Life series

Biological Classification series